





City of Loma Linda Official Report

Floyd Petersen, Mayor
Stan Brauer, Mayor pro tempore
Robert Christman, Councilmember
Robert Ziprick, Councilmember
Charles Umeda, Councilmember

COUNCIL AGENDA: June 7, 2005

TO: City Council

VIA: Dennis R. Halloway, City Manager 

FROM: Deborah Woldruff, AICP, Community Development Director 

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROJECT – The project is a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan document (text and maps) that will set policy and guide the City's development over the next twenty years. Areas directly affected by the update project include all properties located within the City's corporate limits, and properties within the City's Sphere of Influence in the County unincorporated areas generally east and south of the City limits to the Redlands City limits and Riverside County Line.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is that the City Council review and approves in concept the Hillside Conservation Designation (Draft General Plan, Land Use Element, Section 2.2.3).

Staff also recommends that public testimony be limited to the topic at hand. A copy of the Draft Hillside Conservation Designation (June 1, 2005) is contained in Attachment 1.

BACKGROUND

On April 26, 2005, the City Council began their review of the Draft Land Use Element (2.0). The staff and the General Plan Consultant presented the Draft Land Use Element, the City Council briefly discussed certain aspects of the document, and some public testimony was received. Because the City Council felt that there was too much information to absorb and comprehend in one meeting, the Draft Land Use Element was continued to a special meeting on May 17, 2005. It was also decided that a special meeting would be scheduled for the Draft Hillside Designation once the new Councilmember was seated on May 10th.

On May 10, 2005, the City Council scheduled the public hearing for the Draft Hillside Designation for Tuesday, June 7, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. The General Plan Update Project City Council Schedule for Public Hearings (Revised May 31, 2005) is contained in Attachment 2.

Additional background information on the Draft Land Use Element is available in the April 26, 2005 City Council Staff Report that was previously distributed.

ANALYSIS

On April 26, 2005, the City Council discussed the Draft Hillside Conservation Designation at length as part of the discussion of the Draft Land Use Element (2.0). The review and discussion of this topic was continued to a special meeting on June 7, 2005. Staff and the Consultant were asked to revise the text to: simplify the density transfer policies and provide a maximum buildout number. The requested changes are highlighted with strikeover and underline on Page 3 of Attachment 1.

ENVIRONMENTAL

The General Plan Update Project is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been prepared to evaluate the potential impacts of the project. The DEIR and Draft Responses to Comments that were received during the 45-day mandatory public review period will be reviewed by the City Council sometime in March or April 2005.

The project is also subject to the Regional Congestion Management Plan (CMP) and Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) has been prepared to address the CMP requirements. The CMP TIA will be scheduled for the City Council's review in March 2005.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Other than the costs associated with the preparation of the Draft General Plan and related environmental documents, the financial impacts of the General Plan Update are not known at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Hillside Conservation Designation (Revised June 1, 2005)
2. General Plan Update Project City Council Schedule for Public Hearings (May 17, 2005)

PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED DOCUMENTS

1. Draft General Plan (October 2004); and, Draft Land Use Element (April 2005)
2. Draft Existing Setting Report (June 5, 2002)
3. Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (March 22, 2004)
4. Traffic Impact Analysis (May 13, 2004) (CMP document)
5. Draft Final Program Environmental Impact (Report Response to Comments) (June 21, 2004)
6. City Council Staff Reports (October 12, 2004; November 16, 2004; December 7, 2004; December 14, 2004; January 11, 2005; February 1, 2005; February 8, 2005; February 22, 2005; March 8, 2005; April 12, 2005; April 26, 2005; and, May 17, 2005)
7. Planning Commission Staff Reports (April 6, 2005)

General Plan Update Project City Council Schedule for Public Hearings (Revised May 31, 2005)

To date, the City Council has reviewed and approved in concept the Introduction to General Plan Elements (1.0); Community Design Element (3.0); Economic Development Element (4.0); Housing Element (5.0); Noise Element (7.0); Public Services and Facilities Element (8.0); Conservation And Open Space Element (9.0); Public Health And Safety Element (10.0); and, General Plan Implementation Programs (11.0). The following schedule lists the remaining elements and related environmental documents and public hearing dates for the City Council's review:

April 26, 2005 & May 17, 2005*	Land Use Element (2.0)
June 7, 2005	Hillside Designation
June 14, 2005	Land Use Element (2.0) continued
June 28, 2005	Transportation And Circulation Element (6.0) and CMP Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)
July 26, 2005	Draft Final Program Environmental Impact Report (FEIR – including the Response to Comments document)
	Review of Final Draft General Plan document
August 23, 2005	Certification of the FEIR, Adoption of General Plan, and Approval of the CMP TIA

***Note:** The City Council may wish to continue the Land Use Element from May 17, 2005 to the May 24, 2005 City Council Meeting, if additional time is needed.

ATTACHMENT 2

(Revised June 1, 2005)

2.2.3 Hillside Conservation Designation

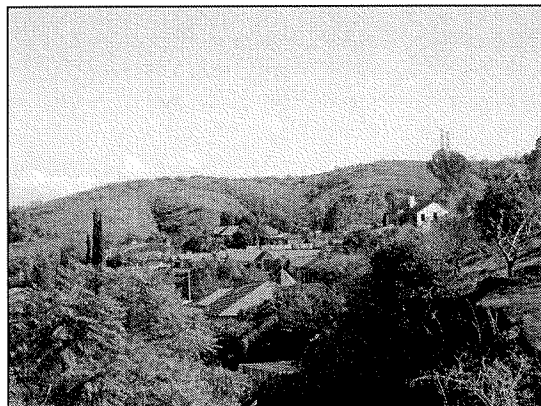
The steepness and visual prominence of the City's hillside area create a unique challenge for managing future development and the protection of the area's natural environment. Much of the southern hillside's steep slopes are highly visible the within the valley portions of Loma Linda and beyond. In addition, the hillside areas in the southern portion of Loma Linda retain a sense of openness and natural beauty that is increasingly rare in Southern California. Loma Linda's hillside areas are identifiable visual symbol, and make a significant contribution to the community, including the provision of open space, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.

In addition to their open space value, Loma Linda's hillside areas also offer a variety of amenities for residential uses (e.g., views, rural character, and privacy) that are not typically available in flat land subdivisions. However, improperly planned development can destroy the very amenities that people seek as the benefits of hillside living.

The General Plan, therefore, strives to achieve an appropriate balance within Loma Linda's hillside area, taking into account the visual landmark it represents to the community, its steep natural terrain, the need to protect biological resources, and the area's recreational opportunities, while recognizing that the majority of the hillside area is privately owned, and not committed to long term open space.

Thus, there are two components to Loma Linda's overall objective for its hillside area:

- Maximize preservation of the area's natural environment in permanent public open space, recognizing the opportunities and constraints that the land itself imposes; and
- Accommodate an appropriate level of development that can be designed to minimize impacts on the natural environment, protect public health and safety, avoid increases in citywide utility and public service costs, and ensure safe access for emergency vehicles.



Residences in the hills of Loma Linda

Thus, the Hillside designation is intended to provide for appropriate management of the City's hillside areas, including preservation of existing public lands in permanent open space, acquisition of additional lands for open space, establishment of a public trails system, and appropriate residential development consistent with community open space objectives.

The General Plan acknowledges that maximizing the preservation of open space does not preclude residential development in Loma Linda's hillsides. The intent of the General Plan is to balance appropriate levels of development and increased preservation efforts. Defining "appropriate levels of development" is accomplished in the General Plan through a combination of a maximum allowable development intensity and controlled development and hillside design policies, since reasonable limitations on single family residential development density and character are needed for the protection of sensitive environmental features; public safety; efficient provision of infrastructure, utilities, and public services; and protection of the City's visual resources.

The General Plan also recognizes that striking a balance between open space preservation, recreational uses, and development is a difficult undertaking, and that pursuit of certain objectives can, at times, conflict with achievement of others. For example, a provision to place dwellings on the flattest areas of a site might result in the placement of dwellings on ridgelines or sensitive habitat areas, which the General Plan aims to protect. Thus, hillside objectives are prioritized below to give guidance to the in situations where an objective can only be achieved at the expense of another. Starting with the highest priority, Loma Linda's hillside priorities are:

1. Preservation in place of habitats occupied by species protected under the federal and state endangered species acts;
2. Public safety;
3. Ensuring economic use of private property;
4. Reducing visual impacts;
5. Providing for public recreational use of hillside areas (e.g. trails);
6. Density, placement, and design of structures;
7. Preservation in open space of habitat areas other than those described in Priority 1, above;
8. Eliminating development visible from the valley floor to the north of the hillside area;

Overall, the strategy emphasizes fitting projects into their hillside setting rather than altering the hillside to fit the project. At the same time, the General Plan recognizes that much of the northern hillside area is in private ownership, and that the property right of landowners must be respected. However, although individual property rights must be recognized, the priority between development and natural resource values should be given to protecting the natural resource.

2.2.3.1 Guiding Policy for Hillside Conservation

Manage environmental values and future development within the hillside area to:

- Protect the area's natural environment and sensitive environmental features, as well as public health and safety, maximizing the preservation of land in permanent public open space;
- Enhance enjoyment of Loma Linda's hillside resources;
- Create prestigious residential communities that take advantage of, rather than merely replace, the area's natural character;
- Ensure that the design/layout of future hillside development adapts to the natural hillside topography and maximizes view opportunities to, as well as from the development; and
- Efficiently provide infrastructure, utilities, and public services.

Implementing Policies

- a. The maximum residential development density shall be as shown in Table 2.B.

Table 2.B: Maximum Residential Build Out

Area	Maximum Density
Areas not Subject to Hillside Initiative	1 du/5 acres (non-clustered development) 1 du/2 acres (clustered development)
Areas Subject to Hillside Initiative	1 du/10 acres (non-clustered development) 1du/5 acres (clustered development)
Public Open Space Properties	No residential development permitted.

A maximum of 775 dwelling units may be developed within lands designated Hillside Conservation, including both lands within and outside of the area subject to the City's Hillside Initiative. In addition, up to one-half (1/2) of the allowable density within the area designated "Very Low Density Residential" that is located at the base of the South Hills may be transferred into the Hillside Conservation land use designation if both areas are part of a comprehensive specific plan prepared for proposed development in both areas.

Achievement of the maximum residential build out cited above is *not* guaranteed; the actual yield of any development will be the result of a site design based upon:

- Site-specific physical characteristics;
- The need for mitigation or avoidance of impacts to biological habitats;
- The environmental sensitivity of proposed site design, grading, and type of construction;
- Available on-site and off-site access; and
- The ability of the proposed project to avoid impacts on other properties.

Consistent with these principles, allowable density may be transferred from the areas targeted for open space acquisition as illustrated in Figure __ to other areas designated "Hillside" ~~at a rate of 1.25 dwelling units for dwelling unit based on the density identified in Table 2.B that would be permitted within a clustered development, provided an appropriate area of land targeted for acquisition are placed in permanent open space.~~

- d. Development on lands that are subject to the City's hillside initiative shall be consistent with the provisions of the initiative in addition to the provisions of the General Plan, the Hillside designation, and applicable zoning, whichever are more restrictive. It is specifically acknowledged that a project that meets applicable development policies might not achieve the maximum allowable development intensity for the site.
- e. The City should actively pursue open space acquisition of the lands illustrated in Figure __, actively seeking opportunities to apply for grants as they become available to purchase private property from willing sellers within Loma Linda's hillside area.

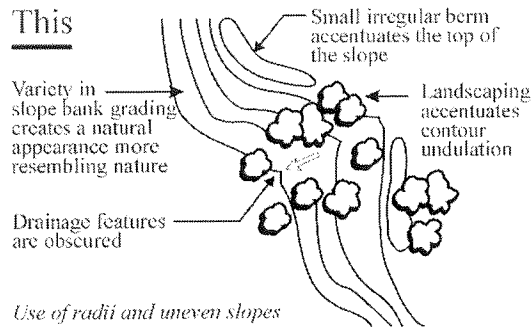
☐The General Plan recognizes that acquisition of all lands illustrated in Figure __ may not be possible, and specifically acknowledges that development of the lands within the area identified for open space acquisition will be permitted to occur consistent with the provisions of the General Plan.

- The City should seek and promote ways for the City or other entities to acquire land for preservation that would have various tax or use benefits for hillside property owners.
 - The City should establish a procedure for publishing notice when a development application for a hillside property is filed to provide applicable agencies and conservancies with the opportunity to approach the landowner regarding acquisition instead of development, if the landowner is willing.
 - The City should consider establishment of funding mechanisms for open space acquisition within the hillside area, such as an open space mitigation fee for new development (if a valid nexus between such development and hillside open space acquisition is determined to exist) or a citywide assessment or bond issue for hillside property acquisition and hillside preservation.
- f. The General Plan recognizes that clustered residential development on smaller lots, in contrast to dispersed development on larger lots, can help to preserve areas of contiguous open space, and thus encourages the clustering of development. When clustered development is approved, the City shall require appropriate legal provisions to ensure the preservation in perpetuity of open space areas.
 - g. Development should be clustered to avoid placement of dwelling units along north facing slopes that are visible from valley areas to the north. Development along such north facing slopes should be permitted only where a property only no feasible building area other than such a north facing slope.
 - h. Development within the hillside area should provide for implementation of the Loma Linda South Hills Trails Master Plan, which will identify existing usable trails, propose new or rehabilitated trails to better link the hillsides, set guidelines for maintenance of the trails, and delineate who is to be responsible for necessary maintenance activities and liability.
 - i. Development along and adjacent to Pilgrim Lane shall respect the existing rural character of the area.
 - Development adjacent to existing rural residential areas along Pilgrim Lane that will be access from Pilgrim Lane shall have a density and minimum lot size compatible with existing rural residential uses.
 - The ability of rural development along Pilgrim Lane to engage in agriculture and commercial animal-keeping activities shall be protected.
 - Development within planned communities adjacent to Pilgrim Lane shall be designed to provide adequate buffer areas adjacent to rural residential uses.
 - j. New development shall provide a trail system that will link with future dedicated trails consistent with the South Hills Trails Master Plan.
 - k. Development shall maintain appropriate horizontal and vertical setbacks from “primary ridgelines,¹” which are the ridgelines mapped on Figure 2-__ having the following characteristics.

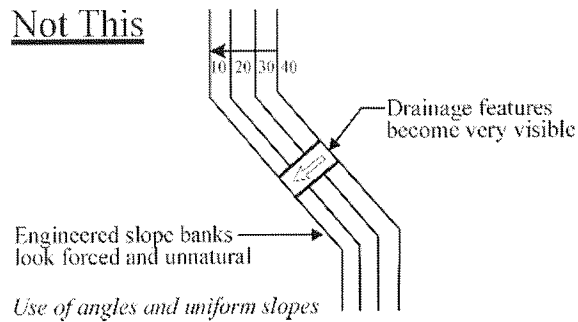
¹ In cases where application of this performance standard would prevent construction of any structures on a lot of record, ensure that obstruction of views of an unbroken natural skyline are minimized, limit heights of ridgeline structures, require that buildings be architecturally designed to conform to the natural topography, and require that appropriate landscaping be provided to soften the impact of the new structure.

- Ridges that have a significant difference in elevation from the valley or canyon floor. Generally, these are recognizable as ridgelines from any location on the valley floor to the north, and from canyon bottoms within the hillside area.
 - Ridges that form a prominent landform in the foreground, and have a major skyline ridge in the background. In some cases, layers of ridges may be visible into the distance,
 - Ridges that frame major access through the hillside area, and will provide the first view of valley and canyon areas as a traveler emerges from the other side of the ridge.
- l. Development projects are to be designed to protect habitat values and to preserve significant, viable habitat areas and habitat connections in their natural condition:
- Within occupied habitat areas of rare, threatened or endangered species, disturbance of protected biotic resources is prohibited.
 - Within riparian and wetland areas, the vegetative resources which contribute to habitat carrying capacity (vegetative diversity, faunal resting areas, foraging areas, and food sources) should be preserved in place or replaced so as to not result in a measurable reduction in the reproductive capacity of sensitive biotic resources. Development shall not result in a net loss of wetlands.
 - On-trail activities shall be limited to those that are consistent with protection of environmental values.
 - Buffer zones adjacent to areas of preserved biological resources shall be provided. Such buffer zones shall be adequate in width so as to protect biological resources from grading and construction activities, as well as from the long-term use of adjacent lands. The landscape design adjacent to areas of preserved biological resources shall be designed so as to avoid invasive species which could negatively impact the value of the preserved resource.
 - Manufactured slopes shall be landscaped or revegetated with natural or naturalized, fire-resistant vegetation.
- m. Development shall, to the extent feasible, avoid impacts on riparian vegetation within "canyon bottoms," which are defined as the land occurring within 50 feet of either side of a line referred to as a "blue line stream" as designated on a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) map. Where impacts to such riparian vegetation are unavoidable, appropriate mitigation shall be provided such that there is no net loss of wetland area
- n. The visual intrusiveness of new development shall be minimized. Rather than relying on substantial landform modification to create large artificial building pads, new development shall be designed and sited to best fit with the hillside's natural contours.
- o. Manufactured slopes shall be landform graded, except within bedrock, where manufactured slopes in excess of 10 vertical feet feasibly cannot be avoided. "Landform grading" is a contour grading method which creates artificial slopes with curves and varying slope ratios in the horizontal and vertical planes designed to simulate the appearance of surrounding natural terrain (as illustrated below). Grading plans shall identify which slopes are to be landform graded and which are to be conventionally graded.

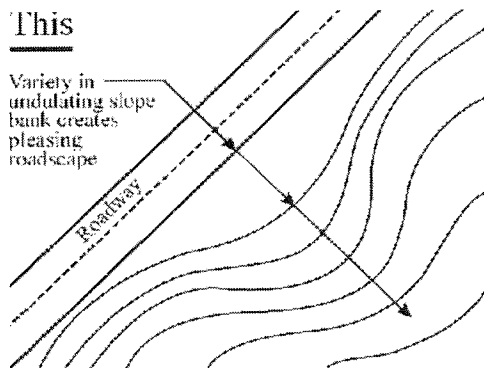
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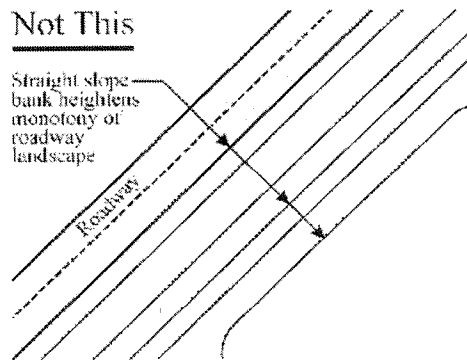
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p.o. New development shall provide for ongoing maintenance of manufactured slopes in order to protect public health and safety.

q.p. New development shall be sited so as to maximize the permanent preservation of large blocks of unbroken open space and to minimize the loss of habitat, wildlife, and watershed resources.

r.q. Where the post-grading condition results in street grades exceeding 10 percent, site design should:

- Allow for different lot shapes and sizes;
- Utilize varying setbacks, structure heights, innovative building techniques, and retaining walls to blend structures into the terrain;
- Retain outward views from the maximum number of units while maintaining the natural character of the hillside;
- Preserve vistas of natural hillside areas and ridgelines from public places and streets; and
- Preserve existing views and allow new dwellings access to views similar to those enjoyed from existing dwellings.

s.r. The overall scale and massing of structures shall respect the natural surroundings and unique visual resources of the area by incorporating designs which minimize bulk and mass, and minimize visual intrusion on the natural landscape.

- Wall surfaces facing towards viewshed areas shall be minimized through the use of single story homes, single story dwellings placed on split pads, setbacks, roof pitches, and landscaping.

- Architectural style, including materials and colors, should be compatible with the natural setting. The use of colors, textures, materials and forms which will attract attention by not relating to other elements in the neighborhood shall be avoided.

t.s. The interface between new development and natural open space should be designed to provide a gradual transition from manufactured areas into natural areas. By extending fingers of planting into existing and sculptured slopes, the new landscape should blend in with the natural vegetation.¹

u.t. Roadway improvements to provide access to parcels should be designed to avoid the need for extensive grading.

- Where appropriate and needed to reduce grading and landform alteration, hillside roadway sections that provide for the safe passage of two cars along a paved road section, may be permitted. On-street parking along such roadway sections would be prohibited.

v.u. The provision of adequate flood control and/or erosion control measures for public and private roadways shall occur in a manner consistent with the character of the hillside area.

- Require the provision of concrete curbs and gutters within the hillside area where they are needed to prevent erosion, as determined by the City Engineer. Within areas outside of clustered developments, rolled curbs are to be the preferred road edge along paved roads where such curbing will be adequate to contain drainage and prevent erosion.

w.v. Use of alternative infrastructure (e.g., septic systems) may be permitted in areas where municipal systems feasibly cannot be extended.

x.w. The cost of infrastructure to serve the South Hills area shall be the responsibility of development within the South Hills.

y.x. Require that a three-dimensional model be submitted for all proposed subdivisions, land divisions, and design review applications. Also require that viewshed analyses be submitted for all new residential construction to identify what development sites will look like in the post-development condition.

(Revised June 1, 2005)

¹ It is intended that the transition between manufactured areas and natural areas occur sufficiently beyond residential structures so as to permit the development to meet applicable Fire Department brush clearance requirements.